

Lever Park School

Stocks Park Drive, Horwich, Bolton, Lancashire, BL6 6DE

Inspection dates

26–27 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Leadership and management are inadequate. Systems and structures are not securely in place and do not enable the school to function effectively, without relying on external support, in the absence of the headteacher.
- Leaders have not been sufficiently rigorous in evaluating the quality of teaching and the impact that teaching and marking have on students' learning.
- Arrangements to manage and support the performance of staff are not securely in place.
- The achievement of students is inadequate. Progress and attainment across groups of students with similar ability over time is too variable. The achievement of different groups of students, including the disadvantaged and most able, is not sufficiently analysed by the school to show the impact of targeted support.
- The governing body has not been effective in holding leaders to account. It is over-reliant on information provided by the headteacher and has not taken action to check the school's self-evaluation and stem the decline in the school's performance.
- Teaching requires improvement. Some teaching secures good progress but this is not consistent. Variability in the quality of feedback to students stalls progress for some.
- Attendance is poor for a small minority of students and some students remain on part-time timetables.
- Behaviour requires improvement as it is not consistently good and strategies to improve behaviour are yet to show impact. A few students have poor attitudes to work and do not attempt the tasks that are set for them.
- The school's safeguarding procedures and processes are not sufficiently diligent, so the school's work to ensure students' safety is inadequate.
- The curriculum does not offer the students the full range of subjects to which they are entitled. Curriculum information is not available on the school's website.

The school has the following strengths

- The interim executive headteacher and the newly formed leadership team have galvanised the school in a very short period of time. Staff are working as a team, are positive about the challenges they face and keen to move the school forward.
- Staff build positive, caring relationships with students.
- The range of vocational courses on offer has a positive impact on students' achievement and their future opportunities. Ninety-five per cent of students leaving school last year entered local college courses and were still attending at the time of the inspection.
- The school is a welcoming, well-resourced learning environment.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed all students who were on site during the inspection being taught across a range of subjects. The lead inspector was joined by one of the assistant headteachers in most of the lessons she observed.
- Inspectors spoke to students formally and informally about the work they were doing, their progress and their views about the school.
- Students' work was scrutinised in lessons and during a meeting an inspector held with them.
- Inspectors considered the work of students who had attended alternative provision off-site.
- Students' behaviour was observed during assemblies, between lessons, at breaks and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors held meetings with the interim executive headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, and members of staff with specific responsibilities.
- The lead inspector had telephone conversations with the school improvement partner and two representatives from the local authority, including the safeguarding officer.
- A wide range of documentary evidence was reviewed, including that relating to students' behaviour, attendance, safety and achievement. Records of the quality of teaching were examined along with the school's self-evaluation and plans for improvement, and minutes of meetings held by the governing body.
- The school's website was checked for compliance with the School Information Regulations 2012.
- No parents responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View). The lead inspector took account of the responses of parents and students to the school's recent surveys. The views of 30 members of staff who submitted responses to the voluntary Ofsted questionnaire during the inspection were also taken into account.
- The headteacher and one of the assistant headteachers were unavailable during the inspection. An interim executive headteacher had been working with the school during the headteacher's absence for two weeks prior to the inspection. A revised senior leadership team had been put in place shortly before the inspection to take over the responsibilities of the assistant headteacher during her absence.

Inspection team

Christina McIntosh, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Stephen Helm

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- Lever Park Special School is a small secondary special school for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- Some students have additional barriers to learning such as autistic spectrum disorders and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.
- The school has capacity for 56 students in Key Stages 3 and 4. A recent extension and refurbishment will increase capacity for another 10 students in 2015.
- The school is maintained by the local authority with a foundation trust and serves the whole borough of Bolton.
- Almost all students are White British and very few speak English as an additional language.
- There are typically far more boys than girls on roll.
- The proportion of students who are disadvantaged and therefore eligible for support through the pupil premium is well above the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding allocated to support those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or who are in the care of the local authority.
- Most students join the school in Year 7 but some join later than that, before the end of Year 9. The majority of students have been excluded from other schools and have experienced a period of disrupted education prior to joining Lever Park School.
- Currently 10 students are on a targeted learning timetable which means they receive one-to-one tuition at home or at another location, or they have alternative provision, or a combination of provision, including a work experience placement. Not all students have full-time provision.
- Due to the small numbers of students on roll, the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress, do not apply.
- The school uses the following alternative providers: Raise the Youth, Heartlift, Mojo Trust and Targeted Youth Support. However, no students were on programmes to access these at the time of the inspection.
- The school has purpose-built vocational areas to deliver construction, hair and beauty skills, motor vehicle maintenance, horticulture and catering skills. Other schools which use, or have access to, these facilities are: Holy Cross Catholic High School, Ladybridge High School, Turton School, St James' Church of England High School, Smithills School and Bolton St Catherine's Academy.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure leaders and managers improve the achievement of students by:
 - making sure more students are accessing full-time provision
 - reviewing behaviour strategies for the impact they have on students' attitudes towards learning
 - using progress and attainment data about groups of different ability students, including the most-able, to check they are being appropriately challenged to deepen and extend their learning in all subjects
 - reviewing the curriculum content and range of qualifications to ensure they meet the needs of all students.
- Improve the quality of teaching in order to accelerate students' progress and raise their attainment by:
 - reviewing the impact of verbal and written feedback on students' progress and ensuring students act on guidance they are given to rectify mistakes or misconceptions in their knowledge, skills and understanding
 - giving staff the opportunity to see outstanding practice
 - having a more comprehensive and transparent system of evaluating the quality of teaching.

- Build leadership capacity so leadership is not over-reliant on the headteacher by:
 - ensuring that all teachers and support staff have a progression plan for their professional development, linked to their roles and responsibilities, and that its impact is rigorously checked
 - involving senior and middle leaders in a rigorous quality assurance process so they fully evaluate the impact of their actions to improve performance in the school
 - improving the recording of the outcomes of safeguarding concerns and the consistency of records of restrictive physical intervention
 - extending opportunities for staff to develop leadership skills.

- Improve the governance of the school and the governing body's ability to support and hold the school to account for its performance by:
 - increasing governors' awareness of recent educational changes so they check that the curriculum and website are compliant with regulations
 - ensuring governors verify evidence provided by the school so they make informed judgements about the quality of teaching and the progress of groups of students including the most-able and disadvantaged students
 - ensuring that the governing body evaluates its own impact on the school's development
 - ensuring that all safeguarding practices are robust, consistent and applicable to all staff and students
 - ensuring governors calculate any potential risks associated with conflicts of interest in the senior leadership team especially regarding safeguarding practices.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

are inadequate

- The headteacher has not ensured that the school can function effectively during the absence of two senior leaders. As a result, the local authority has brought in an interim executive headteacher to provide strategic leadership. Middle leaders have joined the senior leadership team to manage the school in the short term. Quality assurance processes and data analysis by the school's leaders are inadequate. As a result of weak analysis, the school does not have an accurate view of the impact of its actions on school improvement and so has not arrested the decline in the school's performance.
- The school's behaviour and safeguarding procedures and practices are inconsistently followed. Students are taught about the dangers of smoking, yet they are allowed to smoke on site. The impact of strategies used to improve behaviour is not fully evaluated. The designated safeguarding officer's records are inadequate. Safeguarding procedures do not meet statutory requirements.
- Lesson observations, completed by senior leaders and a local authority school improvement partner, are not sufficiently clear about the impact of teaching on students' learning. Work scrutiny, teaching standards and students' progress are not used by the school to provide evidence to judge the quality of teaching. As a result, the school's evaluation of the quality of teaching is inaccurate and performance management of staff is inadequate.
- Staff training and the opportunities to develop leadership capacity have reduced over the past three years. Methods to identify, model and share best practice, both within and beyond the school, are not fully developed. Leaders have not planned effective development matched to the roles and responsibilities of staff at all levels.
- Leaders and governors do not ask for an evaluation of the performance of a wide enough range of groups of students or subjects. There is no proper evaluation of what needs to be put in place to tackle any underperformance of the most-able and other groups of students. The impact of strategies aimed at improving students' achievement does not inform future developments in the school.
- The curriculum does not include music for Key Stage 3 students despite this being a national curriculum requirement. The school offers project time, which covers a range of topics including citizenship and personal, social and health education, but there is no mapping of the content to ensure it covers all the topics required for all students and complies with legislation. The school does not meet the statutory requirement to make curriculum information available on its website.
- The school's approach to religious education is broadly Christian. Assemblies and lessons where students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is addressed provide clear guidance on what is right and what is wrong. Students' preparation for life in modern Britain is helped by the school's encouragement of tolerant and respectful towards people with different views. Restorative justice is being practised in the school and students spoke about their increased maturity since they joined the school, as a result of realising the impact their behaviour has on others.
- Students have effective careers guidance and this, linked to the wide range of vocational courses on offer in the school, allows students to develop good links with employers and colleges so they have aspirations and clear paths to follow when they leave school.
- Students on alternative curriculum packages, such as home-tuition and outreach support, are monitored well regarding their progress, attendance and behaviour. However, the impact of interventions for this group of students, as well as disadvantaged students, is not sufficiently evaluated to inform leaders and managers about the most effective strategies to raise students' achievement. The process of reintegration following interventions does not ensure that the skills and knowledge that students have gained are built upon when they return to class.
- Not all students have equality of opportunity due to some students accessing part-time education rather than attending school full time.
- The recently reformed leadership team has established a 'can do' approach and has the support of the staff to tackle any difficulties which arise during the absence of the headteacher and an assistant headteacher.
- The school should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.
- The local authority has not drilled down into the evidence to support the school's judgements about the quality of teaching and the school's safeguarding procedures, including with regard to restrictive physical intervention, when it has reviewed practice within the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have not been sufficiently diligent in carrying out all their statutory duties regarding safeguarding, the quality of teaching, achievement of groups of students, including the most able and

disadvantaged students, and holding leaders to account. This is reflected in a decline in the performance of the school.

- Governor training has not been focused enough on recent educational changes. As a result, the governing body lacks knowledge about the curriculum and website regulations. The governing body's ability to review its own impact on the school's effectiveness is not evident.
- Governors have been overly reliant on information and judgements provided by the headteacher and have not asked for evidence to make their own judgements about the achievement of students and the quality of teaching. Because of lack of robust information, governors have an overly positive picture of the school.
- The governing body did not calculate potential risks created by any conflict of interest in the senior leadership team, especially regarding safeguarding practices.
- The governing body has ensured that the school is well-resourced through its financial management.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are inadequate

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. Students' attitudes towards all aspects of learning are not consistently good across the school. A small minority of students do not attempt work in class while others engage positively in activities and are prepared to work unaided.
- Instances of more serious behaviour incidents, seen during inspection, were quickly dealt with in a measured way by staff.
- The school's behaviour policy is a team effort. Incidents of poor behaviour are rigorously and consistently tracked through a commercial product used across the school. Records show that low, medium and high level incidents have increased over the past three years. This indicates that current strategies are not being wholly successful.
- Students understand and are motivated by the reward system that encourages them to take personal responsibility for their actions. Students are able to see how well they are progressing by reviewing the behaviour charts which are displayed prominently in their classrooms. The school's rewards system is promoted well to help students improve their self-esteem.
- Students get on well together in lessons, at break and lunchtimes. No derisory or derogatory personal comments were heard during the inspection.
- Students were seen to help staff, for example, when reviewing behaviour rewards during assemblies. Relationships between staff and students are positive. When students were asked about the best aspect of the school many replied, 'The staff – they're always there to help.'

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is inadequate. Poor record-keeping is evident regarding students who had been referred to the designated safeguarding officer. The quality of other records regarding incidents where physical intervention has been used is variable and requires improvement.
- Attendance is below the national average for similar schools. Students on part-time roll do not have the same level of oversight by the school as those on full-time roll in order to keep them safe.
- Appropriate safety checks are made on all new employees and effective risk assessments are in place for all activities accessed by the students.
- Students who spoke with inspectors said they feel safe at school and this was reflected by the responses in the school's parental and students' questionnaires. Students stated that some poor behaviour seen during the inspection was caused by new students settling into the school.
- Students have a good awareness of different forms of bullying and say that bullying is rare and that incidents are quickly and effectively dealt with by staff. A decline in bullying incidents is evident in school records and these are rigorously tracked and analysed.
- The school has a welcoming atmosphere and the premises are well-maintained. Displays on corridors and in classrooms are well presented; there is no evidence of damage around the school and students demonstrate respect towards each other, the staff and visitors.
- Students are taught to have a good understanding of e-safety and are able to demonstrate how they keep themselves safe when using social media.
- The school has introduced a direct email link for students and parents to use and to seek help and support from the school. The counselling service at the school and the strong links with social services provide

students and parents with support which impact positively on students' well-being and progress in school.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because students are not consistently supported to deepen their knowledge and understanding. This results in achievement being inconsistent across classes. The school's view that the quality of teaching is good is not supported by robust evidence. School records available at the time of the inspection are based on formal lesson observations which do not contain enough evidence of the impact of teaching on students' learning.
- Where teaching is at its best, tasks and resources are well matched to students' abilities and interests, students respond positively and make good progress. In a task using spreadsheets, students were able to relate the activity to jobs such as stocktaking. Lots of examples were shared and small steps taken to build up knowledge and understanding to embed and deepen learning.
- When teachers set high expectations in lessons, both in terms of behaviour and the challenge of the tasks set, students are more motivated to do their best and try hard. This was seen in lessons where teachers displayed secure subject knowledge and checked the prior learning of students which gave students confidence to explore the topic further. On other occasions, students were less engaged and their learning was not as purposeful.
- Teaching assistants are well deployed in class and sensitively address students' misconceptions. Good use of open-ended, developmental questioning by adults in the classrooms encourages students to develop their speaking and listening skills.
- Teachers use targets derived from regular assessments to focus on improving students' attitudes to learning, behaviour and attendance. These are displayed in each class so that students know how well they are progressing against their targets. However, students are not made consistently aware of their targets to improve their skills, knowledge and understanding for every subject they study. As a result, there is a lack of focus on the importance of plugging any gaps to accelerate their progress in some lessons.
- Effective marking and feedback is not consistently provided by teachers across the school to support learning. In some subjects, students' work is given a grade or level which is not clearly explained to them. On other occasions, teachers' marking and feedback tells students they have done well but does not explain why. Verbal feedback is often very positive and related to students' effort rather than the accuracy of their skills, knowledge or understanding. As a result, students are not clear about what they should do next to improve their work. Even where marking and feedback are of a high quality and the next steps are included, there is not always a timely opportunity provided for students to act on these. When students are given time to improve their work, their progress is more rapid.
- Teachers' planning shows evidence of teaching literacy and numeracy skills across all subject areas and this was evidenced in the lessons observed by inspectors. In catering, students used the French language, and developed mathematical and scientific concepts when cooking a French dish. In construction, a student named a variety of tools he was using and could explain how he was working safely. Teaching has not, however, secured good progress for all students in literacy and numeracy.
- Teachers' planning incorporates opportunities for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and this was seen when students were creating special memory boxes and others were discussing daily news bulletins.
- Classrooms and workshops are well resourced and provide safe and positive learning environments.

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- All students have had a disrupted education prior to joining the school and some arrive without any reliable prior attainment data. The school uses robust commercial assessment tests to establish the level of attainment of all students when they start at Lever Park School. These results determine students' targets and set their expected levels of progress based on their starting points. There is a wide range of ability levels in each year group.
- Evidence from observations and records of work in students' books indicate that there is a lack of consistency in achievement across groups based on progress from individual starting points.
- At the time of the inspection, the school was not able to provide a reliable analysis of data regarding students' progress over time.
- Higher-ability students in the school under-perform in all subjects. They do not make adequate progress,

given their attainment at the end of Key Stage 2, partly because of the disruption they have experienced in their schooling

- Inspection evidence, including published results and work in students' books, shows that disadvantaged students make inadequate progress. Attainment is low for both disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged groups in English and mathematics. Small cohort numbers do not enable meaningful comparisons to be made between the attainment of disadvantaged students and their peers in the school or nationally.
- Students have gaps in their learning in English and mathematics due to poor management of their reintegration following intervention.
- Students who spoke with inspectors commented individually about how the school had helped them to develop skills including basic spelling and multiplication. Evidence in their books indicates that achievement is improving for some students in these basic skills, in small steps.
- The school attempts to develop students' interest in reading, including through daily reading sessions, but there is insufficient evidence that their literacy skills are improving securely.
- Achievement in science at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 has been identified by the school as an area of concern.
- All students have achieved GCSE grades in English and most have achieved GCSE grades in mathematics for the past three years. Most students achieved low grades in these subjects. The school's curriculum has recently been improved to enable students to take courses in functional skills so that they have the opportunity to gain further qualifications. Too many students have failed to secure grades in GCSE subjects for which they were entered, including in physical education, religious studies and design technology.
- All students taking vocational courses over the past three years achieved their qualifications.
- Ninety-five per cent of students who left the school in summer 2014 went on to attend courses at local colleges.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	131692
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	448016

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	56
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Vickery
Headteacher	Colin Roscoe
Date of previous school inspection	10 November 2011
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